

B1 g) enabling the caller in advance of the call to select between a first option identified as a "hard-stop" and a second option identified as a "soft-stop" for terminating the call when the budgeted amount for telephone calls has been exceeded.

Delete claim 18.

B2 19. (Amended) The methods of claim 16 or 17 wherein the "hard-stop" provides the caller a call termination warning in advance of exceeding the budgeted amount, after which the call is terminated or the caller is provided with an alternative for call payment.

20. The methods of claim 19 wherein the "soft-stop" provides the caller, after exceeding the budgeted amount, notice of a change in call payment method while allowing the caller to continue calls in progress and place new calls.

Delete claims 21 - 57.

#### R E M A R K S

Claims 18-20 which were found allowable, but were objected to for being dependent on a rejected base claim are converted herein to independent form, thereby overcoming the objection. All remaining claims are canceled, thereby overcoming all rejections.

Since the only remaining claims are deemed allowable, applicants respectfully request reconsideration and passage of the case to issue.

Respectfully,  
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**Appendix – Marked Up Version showing Changes Made**

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please delete claims 1-15.

16. (Amended) A method for enabling at least one caller placing a call to a call destination through a communications network via, in part, a telephone line having a number uniquely and permanently assigned to said one caller to budget call costs, comprising the steps of:

- a) storing in a rating data base budgeted information for said caller in accordance with said caller's unique and permanently assigned telephone line number;
- b) receiving said call placed by said caller, and in response, establishing said caller's telephone line number;
- c) accessing a routing database for a call cost to direct the call to the call destination;
- d) accessing the rating data base to retrieve said budgeted information in accordance with the caller's telephone line number;
- e) determining from said budgeted information and from said call cost for said call destination, a maximum allowable time length for said call;
- f) monitoring the call in progress to determine how much time has elapsed; [and]
- g) providing at least one voice announcement to the caller indicative of the time available to the caller; and
- h) enabling the caller in advance of the call to select between a first option identified as a "hard-stop" and a second option identified as a "soft-stop" for terminating the call when the budgeted amount for telephone calls has been exceeded.

17. (Amended) In a communication system including a network coupled through local exchange carriers and a network switch to at least one caller at a permanently assigned telephone number and having a budgeted telephone calling time and amount available for telephone calling recorded in the system, a method for automated control of the budgeted telephone calls and calling costs, comprising:

- a) initiating a telephone call in the system at the permanently assigned number by a customer using the budgeted time and amount recorded in the system;

b) accessing a rating database using a control processor in response to the telephone call; the rating data base containing stored information indicating remaining budgeted telephone calling time and amount available to the calling customer;

c) accessing a telephone call routing database providing instruction for routing the telephone call from the calling customer to a called customer and calling cost for such call, after the telephone call has been accepted by the processor;

d) determining from said budgeted information and from said calling cost a maximum allowable time length for said call;

e) sending a voice message to the calling customer at the beginning of the telephone call to the called customer indicating remaining budgeted telephone calling time and amount available to the calling customer for the telephone call, based upon the maximum allowable time length for said call; [and]

f) tracking the telephone call in real time and initiating a voice message advising the calling customer when the available time for the telephone call will terminate; and

g) enabling the caller in advance of the call to select between a first option identified as a "hard-stop" and a second option identified as a "soft-stop" for terminating the call when the budgeted amount for telephone calls has been exceeded.

Delete claim 18.

19. (Amended) The methods of claim [18] 16 or 17 wherein the "hard-stop" provides the caller a call termination warning in advance of exceeding the budgeted amount, after which the call is terminated or the caller is provided with an alternative for call payment.

20. The methods of claim 19 wherein the "soft-stop" provides the caller, after exceeding the budgeted amount, notice of a change in call payment method while allowing the caller to continue calls in progress and place new calls.

Delete claims 21 - 57.